Staff Memorandum

To	Mayor A. Nuttall, Deputy Mayor R. Thomson and Members of Council
Subject	2026 Arts and Culture Investment Program Results
Date	April 15, 2026
Ward	All
From	K. Datema, Director of Recreation and Culture Services
Executive Member Approval	J. Schmidt, General Manager Community and Corporate Services
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide members of Council with an update concerning the City of Barrie's Arts and Culture Investment Program, including funding allocations for the 2026 intake period.

Background

The Arts and Culture Investment Program, formerly known as the Cultural Grants Program, has been in operation since 2005. All program guidelines are in alignment with Council's direction from 2021.

The Application and Decision-Making Process:

The program guidelines and application forms were made available online for all interested applicants to review and applications were submitted online via APLI. The general public were notified by various communication channels including City of Barrie social media, Culture Pop newsletter, posters on city-owned facility screens and an official press release. Also coinciding with the program launch, two information sessions were offered, with 19 organizations in attendance.

At these sessions staff supported interested organizations by reviewing the program guidelines, discussing eligibility, and making recommendations on application best practices based on evaluation criteria to support success in their 2026 submissions. Staff supported several applicants through calling, emailing and scheduling one-on-one meetings with staff to discuss their applications.

The deadline for applications was Monday, January 19th. Applications were then reviewed for eligibility by staff and sent to the diverse and experienced five-member adjudication panel. The panel is selected through a process that included an open call for adjudicators advertised through Work in Culture and the Culture Pop newsletter. Each adjudicator was selected based on their arts expertise, career history, and adjudication experience in similar grant and funding programs. To ensure impartiality, four of the five adjudicators were

selected from outside the Barrie arts community. Please see Appendix A for the 2026 adjudicators' biographies.

After careful review, the adjudication panel was convened virtually to discuss the applications and score each application based on the organizations and projects' sustainability, artistic merit, community impact and audience development efforts. Adjudicators utilized a consensus model and determined the level of funding investment. To support the impartiality of the selection process, the Cultural Development Officer and City staff only provide administrative support, document the feedback from the adjudicators, and communicate back to the applicants but do not participate in the decision-making process.

Successful recipients then agree to the City's conditions for funding which include eligible and ineligible uses of the funding and how to acknowledge the City for its support. All applicants are provided with constructive feedback from the adjudication panel to improve future applications and have the opportunity to meet directly with City staff to discuss their application results and future applications to support growth and development of the organization in their ability to apply for future funding.

City Investment and Recipients:

For 2026, the council-approved Arts and Culture Investment Program budget is $235,000. The fund received 27 applications requesting a combined total of $431,593 in funding. Based on the process above, 19 community organizations/projects will receive funding for the 2026 funding year.

The adjudication panel would like to commend the diversity of applications and how they demonstrated Barrie's vibrant arts and cultural community. Please see below for the final list of recipients and their funding amounts from the 2026 Arts & Culture Investment Program.

2026 Operating Funding Recipients

Organization	Amount Awarded
Barrie Concert Band	$1,500
Barrie Film Festival	$49,000
Bravado! Show Choir	$10,000
Canadian Musicians Cooperative, Inc.	$17,000
Huronia Symphony Orchestra	$10,000
Kempenfelt Community Players	$6,500
King Edward Choir	$3,500

Simcoe Contemporary Dancers	$20,000
Talk Is Free Theatre	$63,000
Theatre by the Bay	$15,000*
Total	**$195,500**

The $15,000 in operating funds awarded to Theatre by the Bay will not be distributed as cash funding directly to Theatre by the Bay, but rather will be allocated as the first of five repayments to the City of Barrie Theatre Reserve for Theatre by the Bay's loan allocation of the cultural grant budget, per motion 24-G-107, approved by Council on May 15, 2024.

2026 Project Funding Recipients

Organization	Amount Awarded
Barrie Film Festival	$5,000
Expo Brasil Barrie	$5,000
La Cle	$5,000
Making Change	$4,500
Metis & Me	$5,000
Simcoe Contemporary Dancers	$4,000
South Asian Association of Simcoe County	$5,000
Spare Room	$4,000
Ukrainian National Federation - Barrie	$2,000
Total	**$39,500**

The Arts and Culture Investment Program enhances Barrie's social, economic, and cultural prosperity by supporting Council's Strategic Priorities:

- Investment in local not-for-profit arts and culture organizations supports the strategic priority of making Barrie an affordable place to live by encouraging and supporting job creation in the arts and culture sector and by attracting talent to support employers through the support of cultural tourism initiatives and the cultural industries.

- The Arts and Culture Investment Program supports the strategic priority of maintaining a thriving community by championing equity, diversity, and inclusion in applicants and funded programs, by fostering creative and cultural programs that support community wellness, by fostering growth in arts and culture, by supporting events and initiatives that expand and maximize access to parks and recreation opportunities, and by supporting a vibrant downtown through the funding of artistic programs and projects set in the city's core.

Appendix:

Appendix A – 2026 Arts and Culture Investment Program adjudicators' biographies

Memo Author:

Amanda Dyke, B.Sc., Cultural Development Officer, Recreation and Culture Services

Pending #: Not Applicable

Appendix A

2026 Arts and Culture Investment Program Adjudicators' Biographies

Jessica Allen

Jessica Allen is a Barrie resident and artist who serves on the Board of Directors at the Orillia Museum of Art and History, where she also chairs the History Committee. Professionally, she works in the Executive Office at the Town of Newmarket, supporting seven councillors in municipal governance and community engagement. Jessica is a writer, public speaker, and public artist, with installations in Collingwood and Orillia, and upcoming works in Barrie and Wasaga Beach.

Carrie Brooks-Joiner

Carrie Brooks-Joiner is a lifelong supporter and advocate for the culture and heritage sector, with extensive leadership experience across federal, provincial, municipal, and private-sector environments. Throughout her career, Carrie has held senior roles that bridge strategy, public service, and community impact. Prior to her recent retirement, Carrie's leadership experience includes serving as Director of Tourism and Culture and Director of Continuous Improvement and Customer Experience for the City of Hamilton. Carrie brings deep expertise in the creation, administration, adjudication and evaluation of grant and investment programs within not-for-profit and public-sector organizations. Her work reflects a strong commitment to strengthening cultural institutions, fostering sustainable community development, and enhancing the impact of public investment in arts, culture, and heritage.

Farah Fancy

Farah Fancy is an artist, arts business consultant, and international public speaker whose practice sits at the intersection of embodied performance, socially engaged art, and

decolonial cultural work. Working across performance, facilitation, and community-based creation, Farah designs and leads artistic projects that engage questions of identity, power, belonging, and social transformation. Her artistic work has been presented internationally, and she has created and produced over 30 performances alongside leading more than 300 programs and cultural initiatives for social change. In parallel, her trauma-informed public speaking and facilitation work has reached over one million people in engagements in North America, the Caribbean, Central America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. Farah is a co-founder of Le Groupe Herencias, the CanAsian Arts Network, and the Dance Movement Therapy Association in Canada, organizations dedicated to strengthening artistic practice, professional pathways, and cultural ecosystems. Her work is grounded in pluriversal design, relational and trauma-informed practice, and a deep commitment to equity, care, and collective potential within professional artistic and community contexts.

Anya Gansterer

Anya Gansterer is a curator, arts advocate and promoter of rural cultural, tourism and economic development in the unceded and unsurrendered Ancestral territory of the Algonquin Peoples, now known as the Ottawa Valley. Through her advocacy and consulting practice, she supports businesses and organizations to engage with art and culture as a means to social, environmental and economic sustainability. Anya holds the position of Artistic Director for the nonprofit organization Ottawa Valley Community Arts (OVCAOS), where she works collaboratively to promote the integration of art into the lives of individuals, families, and communities across the Ottawa Valley.

Nawfal Sheikh

Nawfal Sheikh is a purpose-driven arts administrator with over 20 years of experience supporting equity-deserving communities through public arts funding, community grant programs, and cultural initiatives. He brings deep experience in adjudication and peer assessment processes, working collaboratively with committees, artists, and arts organizations to ensure public investments are stewarded with fairness, transparency, and care. Nawfal is committed to fostering inclusive and respectful processes and approaches his work with integrity, compassion, and a strong sense of accountability to community. He holds a Graduate Diploma in Journalism from Concordia University and a BA (Honours) in Mass Communications and Humanities from York University.